Aunt Jennifer's Tigers

Aunt Jennifer's tigers prance across a screen,
Bright topaz denizens of a world of green.
They do not fear the men beneath the tree;
They pace in sleek chivalric certainty.

Aunt Jennifer's fingers fluttering through her wool
Find even the ivory needle hard to pull.
The massive weight of Uncle's wedding band
Sits heavily upon Aunt Jennifer's hand.

When Aunt is dead, her terrified hands will lie
Still ringed with ordeals she was mastered by.
The tigers in the panel that she made
Will go on prancing, proud and unafraid.

by Adrienne Rich


Questions to Guide Understanding of the Poem
1. How does diction play a part in the indirect characterization of Aunt Jennifer—consider such words/phrases as “fingers fluttering,” “hard to pull,” “massive weight,” “sits heavily,” “terrified hands,” and “ordeals she was mastered by.”
2. What examples of figurative language are present in this poem, and how does their use contribute to the characterization of Aunt Jennifer? Consider the same questions for sound devices such as alliteration, consonance, and assonance.
3. What can we discover about Aunt Jennifer through both direct and indirect characterization?

Paragraph Considerations
One of the great techniques at work in this poem is that of contrast. When juxtaposed with the tigers she creates through needle point, how does the characterization of Aunt Jennifer become evident? How are the tigers a contrast to her in character? Consider such literary devices as diction, sound, and imagery.

Assignment:
1. Complete SPLOTTS notes for this poem;
2. Write a paragraph according to the assigned SPLOTTS paragraph format that discusses how Rich's use of CONTRAST helps reveal a theme of the poem.